NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6151 SEPTEMBER 21, 1978
FRED BROWN/NEW DELHI

DELHI-PEKING-MOSCOW EQUATION

ANNCR:

INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY PLANNERS ARE MOVING AHEAD CAUTIOUSLY WITH PREPARATIONS FOR THE FORTHCOMING VISIT TO CHINA BY EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER A.G. VAJPAYEE IN VIEW OF DISQUIET OVER THE TRIP IN MOSCOW. VOA CORRESPONDENT FRED BROWN IN NEW DELHI SENT THIS BACKGROUND REPORT:

VOICE:

INDIAN OFFICIALS HAVE SOUGHT TO PLAY IT DOWN, BUT AN EFFORT TO CALM SOVIET CONCERN OVER MISTER VAJPAYEE'S PLANNED TRIP TO PEKING OBVIOUSLY WAS ONE PURPOSE OF HIS JUST-CONCLUDED VISIT TO MOSCOW. DURING HIS STAY IN THE SOVIET CAPITAL, MISTER VAJPAYEE REPORTEDLY TOLD SOVIET LEADERS THAT NEW DELHI'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING CHINA, WILL NOT BE AT THE EXPENSE OF MOSCOW AND UPON HIS RETURN TO NEW DELHI, THE INDIAN OFFICIAL TOOK PAINS TO POINT OUT THAT HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP TO PEKING WILL BE MAINLY EXPLORATORY. HE CONCEDED THAT THE SINO-INDIAN BORDER DISPUTE, THE MAIN STICKING POINT IN THE WAY OF IMPROVED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, MIGHT COME UP. BUT MISTER VAJPAYEE SAID HE DID NOT EXPECT MUCH TO BE RESOLVED. AT THE SAME TIME, MISTER VAJPAYEE LAID TO REST SPECULATIONS IN SOME QUARTERS HERE THAT THE TRIP MIGHT BE CANCELLED OR POSTPONED. HE SAID HE WILL BE TRAVELING TO THE CHINESE CAPITAL DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF NOVEMBER.

THE VIEW IN NEW DELHI GLEANED FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH INDIAN OFFICIAL SOURCES IS THAT SO LONG AS INDIA MAINTAINS PROPER RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND PROJECTS ITS DESIRE FOR

CLOSE BILATERAL TIES WITH PEKING AS A MATTER OF SOVEREIGN, INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT, SINO-SOVIET DIFFERENCES SHOULD NOT COME INTO THE PICTURE. THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE IN MISTER VAJPAYEE'S TALKS IN MOSCOW APPEARED TO CONCEDE THIS POINT. IT SAID THAT MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COOPERATION AMONG ASIAN STATES MUST BE DEVELOPED AND EXTENDED IN ORDER TO CONSOLIDATE PEACE AND STABILITY IN THE REGION.

NEVERTHELESS, CONTINUING DISQUIET IN MOSCOW OVER THE PLANNED PEKING VISIT IS APPARENT FROM THE PROMINENCE GIVEN BY THE SOVIET NEWSPAPER PRAVDA TO RECENT CRITICISM IN INDIA OF SINO-INDIAN NORMALIZATION. ON THE SAME DAY THAT MISTER VAJPAYEE LEFT MOSCOW, PRAVDA QUOTED MADHU LIMAYE, ONE OF SEVERAL GENERAL SECRETARIES OF THE RULING JANATA PARTY AS SAYING THAT NORMAL RELATIONS WITH PEKING COULD UNDERMINE INDIA-SOVIET RELATIONS. MISTER LIMAYE BELONGS TO AN ANTI-DESAI FACTION WITHIN JANATA.

HIS WARNING CONTRASTS WITH OPTIMISTIC STATEMENTS FROM A JANATA PARLIAMENTATIAN, DOCTOR SUBMANMIAN SWAMY, WHO RECENTLY VISITED CHINA. DOCTOR SWAMY HAS PICTURED PEKING AS EAGER FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH NEW DELHI AND HOPEFUL OF SETTLING THE BORDER DISPUTE.

THE CONTRASTING STATEMENTS OF THE TWO MEN ARE EVIDENCE OF THE GROWING RIVALRY BETWEEN PRO-MOSCOW AND PRO-PEKING FACTIONS IN INDIA. PRIME MINISTER MORARJI DESAI, OF COURSE, HAS REMAINED DISCREETLY NEUTRAL AND APART FROM SUCH RIVALRY. (OPT) AFTER MEETING FOR AN HOUR WITH DOCTOR SWAMY, MISTER DESAI WOULD GIVE NEWSMEN NO HINT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT HE SHARED DOCTOR SWAMY'S EUPHORIA. BUT WHEN CRITICS QUESTIONED DOCTOR SWAMY'S COMPETENCE IN THE MATTER, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE PARLIAMENTARIAN'S VIEWS WERE HIS OWN AND HE COULD NOT BE STOPPED FROM VOICING THEM. (END OPT)

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